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Children's Literacy Nonprofit *Reach Out and Read* Teams Up with *First Book* to Deliver 13,000 Books to Washington State Programs To Honor First Official 9/11 Day of Service

WASHINGTON (September 10, 2009) In recognition of the nation's first official September 11 Day of Service and Remembrance, Reach Out and Read will match funding from First Book to double the number of books reaching community programs serving at-risk children, delivering more than **13,000** books through local literacy programs across Washington state.

"First Book was delighted to partner in this first-of-its-kind collaboration among these well-known children's literacy giants to deliver age-appropriate books to local heroes and volunteers serving our most vulnerable children to raise the quality of education these children receive," said Kyle Zimmer, president of First Book. *"When children lack the most basic resources to learn to read we risk losing them and their talents in our society. By delivering brand new books through the work of tremendously committed literacy partners and programs, we target the root of the literacy crisis that has plagued our nation for generations."*

"Reach Out and Read is thrilled to put more books into the hands of young children and families through medical practices across Washington state in honor of the Day of Service and Remembrance," said Dr. Jill Sells, Director of Reach Out and Read Washington State. *"It is an honor to support families, and the doctors and communities who serve them, so we can help children be healthy and ready for success in school."*

Research confirms that children's lack of access to books is a central obstacle to literacy development yet most children from low-income families grow up without this critical resource. One study found that in middle-income neighborhoods there is an average of 13 age-appropriate books per child, while in low-income neighborhoods there is one book for every 300 children. Research has shown that families who participate in the Reach Out and Read program read more frequently to their children. When doctors give families new books and encourage them to read with their young children, it helps parents know how to support their children's development.

"We know that pediatricians are some of the most trusted advisors to parents, so pairing them with books and having them be the "messenger" to parents about the importance of books and reading to their child is powerful," said Nina Auerbach, CEO of Thrive By Five Washington. *"Reach Out and Read is doing essential work in our state to encourage early literacy through physicians. Thrive is proud to partner with them in communities across the state".*

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The successful literacy-focused collaboration with *Reach Out and Read* matching funding from First Book will provide a total of more than 50,000 books to children in communities around the nation. In honor of the *United We Serve* campaign, First Book also provided more than 1.3 million additional books to children nationwide.

This exciting collaboration is one of the thousands of service projects across the nation in honor of September 11. This past April, President Obama signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act and officially recognized September 11 as a National Day of Service and Remembrance for the first time. This September 11, Americans will join together in service projects across all fifty states and re-commit to serving their communities.

United We Serve is President Obama's national call to service challenging all Americans to engage in sustained, collaborative, and focused service in their communities. *United We Serve* is being led by the Corporation for National and Community Service, a federal agency that improves lives and strengthens communities through volunteering and service. For more information, visit www.Serve.gov.

First Book provides new books to children in need, addressing one of the most important factors affecting literacy – access to books. An innovative leader in social enterprise, First Book has distributed more than 60 million free and low cost books in thousands of communities. First Book now has offices in the U.S. and Canada. For more information about the nonprofit First Book please visit www.firstbook.org.

Reach Out and Read (ROR) is a national nonprofit organization that promotes early literacy by giving new books to children and advice to parents about the importance of reading aloud at regular pediatric checkups. More than 20 million books have been distributed through ROR, which currently serves 25 percent of the most impoverished children in the U.S. ROR is endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics and has one of the strongest records of research support of any primary care intervention. This year, Reach Out and Read programs in Washington state will provide more than 95,000 new books to young children through 95 medical practices, helping children across Washington be healthy and ready for success in school. For further information visit <http://www.reachoutandreadwa.org>.

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